

# MORRIS AND THE HONORABLE TIM

By Myra Kelly.

EARLY in January came the report that "Gum Shoe Tim" was on the warpath and might be expected any time. Miss Bailey heard the tidings in calm ignorance until Miss Blake, who ruled over the adjoining kingdom, interpreted the warning.

A license to teach in the public schools of New York is good for one year. Its renewal depends upon the reports of the principal in charge of the school and of the associate superintendent in whose district the school chances to be. After three such renewals the license becomes permanent, but Miss Bailey was, as a teacher, barely four months old. The associate superintendent for her vicinity was the Hon. Timothy O'Shea, known and dreaded as "Gum Shoe Tim," owing to his engaging way of creeping softly up back stairs and appearing, all unheralded and unwelcome, upon the threshold of his intended victim.

Miss Bailey was one of the beginners, and room 13 was made to shine as the sun. Morris Mogilewsky, monitor of the goldfish bowl, wrought busily upon his charges, gloved redly against the water plants in their shining bowl. Crepters crept, plants grew and ferns waved under the care of Nana Spilsky, monitor of the window boxes. There was such a martial swing and strut in Patrick Brennan's leadership of the line that it inspired even the timid heart of Iddie Vishnevsky with a warlike glow and his feet with a spasmodic but well meant tramp. Sadie Gonorowsky and Eva, her cousin, sat closely side by side, no longer "mad on themselves," but "mild kind feelings."

The work of the preceding term was laid neat and pocketed diligently upon the low bookcase. The children were enjoined to keep clean and entire. And teacher, a nervous and unsmiling teacher, waited daily.

A week passed thus, and then the goodhearted and experienced Miss Blake hurried ponderously across the hall to put teacher on her guard. "I've just had a note from one of the grammar teachers," she panted. "Gum Shoe Tim" is up in Miss Greene's room. He'll take this floor next. Now, see here, child, don't look so frightened. The principal is with Tim. Of course you're nervous, but I'll show it. And you'll be all right; his lay is discipline and reading. Well, good luck to you!"

Miss Bailey took heart of grace. The children read surprisingly well, were absolutely good, and the enemy, under convoy of the friendly principal, would be much less terrifying. "Gum Shoe Tim" at large and alone. It was, therefore, with a manner almost serene that she turned to greet the kindly concerned principal and his associate, the Hon. Timothy. The latter she found less ominous of aspect than she had been led to fear, and the principal's charming little speech of introduction stamped out the dialer's flush with quick pleasure. And the anxious eyes of Sadie Gonorowsky, noting the flush, grew calm as Sadie whispered to Eva, her close cousin.

"Say, Teacher has a glad. She's red on the face. It could be her papa."

"No, it's compy," answered Eva sagely. "It ain't her papa. It's compy, the white teacher takes him by the hand."

The children were not in the least disconcerted by the presence of the large man. They always enjoyed visitors and they liked the heavy gold chain which festooned the wide white waistcoat of this guest. As they watched him, the associate superintendent began to supine.

He looked at the children all in their clean and smiling rows; he looked at the flowers and the goldfish; at the pictures and the plaster casts; he looked at the work of the class and then he looked at the teacher. As he looked he smiled gently on his rubber heels and decided that he was going to enjoy the coming year. The local places pleased him from the first. She was neither old nor ill-favored, and she was most evidently nervous. The combination appealed both to his love of power and his peculiar sense of humor. Setting deliberately in the chair of state, he began:

"Can the children sing, Miss Bailey?"

"They could sing very prettily, and they did."

"Very nice, indeed," said the voice of visiting authority. "Very nice. The music is exceptionally good. And are they drilled? Children, you may march for me."

Again they could and did. Patrick marshaled his line in time and triumph up and down the aisles to the evident interest and approval of the "compy," and then teacher led the class through some very energetic Swedish movements. While arms and bodies were bending and straightening at teacher's command and example, the door opened and a breathless boy rushed in. He bore an unfolded note, and, as teacher had no hand to spare, the boy placed the paper on the desk under the softening eyes of the Honorable Timothy, who glanced down idly and then pounced upon the note and read its every word.

"For you, Miss Bailey," he said in the voice before which even the school janitor had been known to quail. "Your friend was thoughtful, though a little late." And poor, palpitating Miss Bailey read:

"Watch out! 'Gum Shoe Tim' is in the building. The principal caught him on the back stairs and they're going round together. He's late and he's a bear. Greene is dead faint in dressing room. Says he's going to fire her. Watch out for him, and send the news on. His lay is reading and discipline. 'Gum Shoe Tim' is a bear. The gentle-hearted principal took the paper from her nerveless grasp."

"It's all right," he assured her. "Mr. O'Shea understands that you had no part in this. It's all right. You are not responsible."

But teacher had no ears for his soothing. She could only watch with fascinated eyes as the Honorable Timothy reclaimed the note and wrote across its damning face: "Miss Greene may come to. She is not fired. T. O'S."

"Here, boy," he called, "take this to your teacher. The principal's angry, turned to obey, and the associate superintendent saw that though his dignity had suffered his power had increased. If so disposed, devour, he had now added the name of the principal, who was quite as much a part of the unpleasant investigation before him. If Miss Bailey could not be held responsible for this system of interclassroom communication, it was clear that the principal could.

Every trace of interest had left Mr. O'Shea's face as he asked:

"Can they read?"

"Oh, yes, they read," responded Teacher, but her spirit was crushed and the children reflected her depression. Still, they were marvelously good, and that blundering note had said, "Discipline in his lay." Well, here he had it. There was no escape from this drama, who, understanding no word nor incident therein, yet missed no shade of the many emotions which had stirred the light face of his lady.

Toward the front of the room sat Morris Mogilewsky, with every nerve tuned to Teacher's, and with an appreciation of the situation which the other children had no share. On the

afternoon of one of those dreary days of waiting for the evil which had now come, Teacher had endeavored to explain the nature and possible result of this ordeal to her favorite. It was clear to him now that she was troubled, and he held the large and unaccustomed presence of the "compy mit whiskers" responsible.

Countless generations of ancestors had followed and fostered the instinct which now led Morris to propitiate an angry power. Luckily, he was prepared with an offering of a suitable nature. He had meant to enjoy it for yet a few days, and then to give it to Teacher. She was such a sensible person about presents. One might give her one's most cherished possession with a brave and cordial heart, for on each Friday afternoon she returned the gifts she had received during the week. And this with no abatement of gratitude.

Morris rose stealthily, crept forward and placed a bright blue bromo-seltzer bottle in the fat hand which hung over the back of the chair of state. The hand closed instinctively as, with dawning curiosity, the Honorable Timothy studied the small figure at his side. It began in a wealth of loosely curling hair which shaded a delicate face, very pointed as to chin and monopolized by a pair of dark eyes, sad and deep and beautiful. A faded blue "jumper" was buttoned tightly across the narrow chest; frayed trousers were precariously attached to the "jumper," and impossible shoes and stockings supplemented the trousers. Glancing toward the bottle, the "compy mit whiskers" asked:

"What's this for?"

"For you."

"What is it?"

"A present."

Mr. O'Shea removed the cork and proceeded to draw out incredible quantities of absorbent cotton. When there was no more to come, a faint tinkle sounded within the blue depths and Mr. O'Shea, reversing the bottle, found himself possessed of a trampled and disfigured sleeve link of most palpable brass.

"It's from gold," Morris assured him. "You puts it in your—scuse me—shirt. Wish you health to wear it."

"Thank you," said the Honorable Tim, and there was a tiny break in the gloom which had enveloped him. And then, with a quick memory of the note and of his anger:

"Miss Bailey, who is this young man?"

And Teacher, whose hobbies Morris was not, answered warmly:

"He's Morris Mogilewsky, the best of boys. He takes care of the goldfish and does all sorts of things for me. Don't you, dear?"

"Teacher, yiss ma'am," Morris answered. "I'm lovin' much mit you. I gives presents on the compy over you."

"Ain't he rather big to speak such broken English?" asked Mr. O'Shea.

"I hope you remember that it is part of your duty to stamp out the dialer's flush."

"Yes, I know," Miss Bailey answered. "But Morris has been in America for so short a time. Nine months, is it not?"

"Teacher, yiss ma'an. I comes out of Russia," responded Morris, on the verge of tears and with his face buried in Teacher's dress.

Now, Mr. O'Shea had his prejudices strong and deep. He had been given jurisdiction over that particular district because it was his native heath, and the board of education considered that he would be more in sympathy with the native-born than a stranger. The truth was absolutely the reverse. Because he had spent his early years in a large old house in East Broadway, where there would be no such thing as a change to a squalid tenement, and the happy hunting grounds of his youth grooved him to the ways of the world with quick pleasure. And the anxious eyes of Sadie Gonorowsky, noting the flush, grew calm as Sadie whispered to Eva, her close cousin.

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woman about her little Jew. She would be comforted later on.

Mr. O'Shea rather fancied himself in the role of comforter when the sufferer was neither old nor ill-favored. And he set about creating the distress which he would later change to gratitude and joy. Assuredly the Honorable Timothy would appear, but he would not be so easily deceived. "His English is certainly dreadful," remarked the voice of authority, and it was not an English voice, nor is O'Shea a well-developed sense of humor.

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sword. "He is gentle and tractable beyond words."

"Well, I hope you're right," grunted Mr. O'Shea. "But don't coddle them."

And so the incident closed. The sleeve link was tucked, before Morris's yearning eyes, into the reluctant pocket of the wide, white waistcoat, and Morris returned to his place. He found his reader and the proper page, and the lesson went on with brisk serenity; real on the children's part, but bravely assumed on Teacher's. Child after child stood up, read, sat down again; and it came to be the duty of Bertha Binderwitz to read the entire page of which the others had each read a line. She began jubilantly, but soon stumbled, hesitated and wailed:

"Stands a fierce word. I don't know what it is."

And here was teacher, whom he dearly loved, whose ideals of personal adornment extended to full sets of buttons on jumpers and to laces in both shoes. Here was his immaculate lady fair in urgent need of assistance and

advice, and all because she had on that day inaugurated a delightfully vigorous exercise for which architecturally she was not designed.

There was yet one hope for hope that some one else would see the breach and brave the danger. But no. The visitor sat stolidly in the chair of state, the principal sat serenely beside him, the children sat each in his own little place behind his own little desk, keeping his own little eyes on his own little book.

Up into the quiet air went his timid hand. Teacher, knowing him in his more garrulous moods, ignored the threatened interruption of Bertha's spirited remark, but the windmill action of the little arm attracted the Honorable Tim's attention.

"The best of boys wants you," he edged in and teacher perforce asked:

"Well, Morris, what is it?"

Not until he was on his feet did the monitor of the goldfish bowl appreciate the enormity of the mission he had undertaken. The other children began to understand, and watched his struggle for words and breath with sympathetic interest as their nature prompted. But there are no words in which one may politely mention ineffective safety pins to one's glass of water. Bertha's knees trembled queerly, his breathing grew difficult, and teacher seemed a great way off as she asked again:

"Well, who is it, dear?"

Morris panted a little, smiled weakly, and then sat down. Teacher was evidently puzzled, the "compy" alert, the principal anxious. The nature of the decision as their nature prompted. But there are no words in which one may politely mention ineffective safety pins to one's glass of water. Bertha's knees trembled queerly, his breathing grew difficult, and teacher seemed a great way off as she asked again:

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what it is, and teacher turned to write the puzzling word upon the blackboard.

Morris' heart stopped with a sickening suddenness and then rushed madly on again. He had a new and dreadful duty to perform. All his mother's counsel, all his father's precepts told him that it was his duty. Yet fear held him in his little seat behind his little desk, while his conscience insisted on this unalterable decree of the social code: "So somebody's clothes is wrong, it's polite you say 'scuse' and tells it out."

And here was teacher, whom he dearly loved, whose ideals of personal adornment extended to full sets of buttons on jumpers and to laces in both shoes. Here was his immaculate lady fair in urgent need of assistance and

advice, and all because she had on that day inaugurated a delightfully vigorous exercise for which architecturally she was not designed.

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